

I will be watching the negotiations and hope it will produce the kind of agreement I have discussed here today. But regardless of what Copenhagen brings, I will continue to advocate for domestic legislation that invests in clean, domestic energy, and frees us from energy policies that undermine our national security and our economy by being dependent upon imported oil.

I will advocate for legislation that invests in the industries of tomorrow to stem the loss of clean energy jobs—jobs that stem from American inventions and ideas—to countries overseas. I will advocate for legislation that provides significant investment in clean fuels and public transit, so we seize an opportunity to build the infrastructure of tomorrow and change the way we move people and goods around this country. Right now, the transportation sector represents 30 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions and 70 percent of our oil use. If we could only double the number of transit riders every day, we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil by 40 percent. That is equivalent to the amount of oil we import every year from Saudi Arabia.

That kind of legislation is good for our country and good for Maryland. But we must remember that even after Copenhagen, any deals we reach, any papers we sign, are still but the foundation. The work must continue with earnest followthrough, dedicated to truly changing the way we work and live and move around this Earth.

OSCE MINISTERIAL MEETING

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, last week the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, held its annual Ministerial Meeting in Athens. As always, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was strongly represented there. Today, in my capacity as Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I would like to offer a few reflections on the outcome of the meeting, and what this might mean for the future of European security, in which the U.S. has a vital stake.

Each year, a different country serves as the OSCE's "Chairman in Office." This year, Greece was the Chairman-in-Office and this year's Ministerial Council meeting subsequently took place in Athens. In recent years discord and paralysis have increasingly begun to overwhelm the cooperation and consensus that once characterized the OSCE. The Greeks thus began their chairmanship facing a difficult challenge.

At last year's meeting in Helsinki under Finland's able chairmanship, the Ministers decided that the OSCE should look for ways to overcome this gridlock and to give the organization a new impetus. Greece took this task to heart and launched the "Corfu Process" to do just that. This effort has already borne fruit. In Athens, the ministers resolved to continue to try to re-

affirm, review, and reinvigorate security in the OSCE region by continuing this process.

The Ministers also agreed on decisions that addressed such fundamental and persistent problems as hate crimes, tolerance and nondiscrimination, non-proliferation, terrorism, and the "protracted conflict" in Nagorno-Karabakh. One of these decisions, on countering transnational threats, was sponsored by the U.S. and Russia, the first such joint effort in several years. I hope this is a positive portent for the future.

The Ministers were not able to agree on how to tackle some other equally important and pressing problems. These included the protracted conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, OSCE assistance to Afghanistan, and the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. Clearly, much work remains to be done in putting the OSCE fully back on track.

I would be remiss if I concluded my remarks without commending the Greek chairmanship for its untiring and ultimately successful efforts during the course of this year. The chairmanship rekindled the trust and confidence among the participating states that had steadily eroded over the past decade. Greece has clearly set the stage for a brighter and more productive future for the organization, and my colleagues on the Helsinki Commission, and I would like to congratulate the Greek chairmanship on this significant accomplishment.

We would also like to wish Kazakhstan, the first Central Asian nation to hold this office, every success in its historic chairmanship in 2010 and to offer them our full support. Indeed, in our view the Kazakh chairmanship is already off to a promising start, for in Athens, at the initiative of the Kazakhs, the Ministers decided to hold a high-level conference on tolerance next year. This proved to be a timely decision, coming as it did just as Switzerland voted to ban the construction of Muslim minarets, and the president of the Swiss Christian Peoples Party called for a ban on Muslim and Jewish cemeteries. These actions reminded us that not even countries that have played a leading role in establishing international human rights standards are immune from the tendencies to discriminate against immigrants and minorities and to place limits on the free expression of religious beliefs.

It is very important for the OSCE to combat these troublesome trends. It is also important that all the organization's participating states reaffirm, and commit themselves to upholding, the rights of all religious communities to create places of worship and to rest in line with their own traditions. I very much hope the OSCE's conference on tolerance next year will advance this effort.

Finally, let me say that we look forward with great interest to the forthcoming discussions of Kazakhstan's proposal to hold a meeting of heads of

state and government during its chairmanship. Should it happen, this would be the first such "summit" under OSCE auspices, something that was previously a regular occurrence. In Athens, in acceding to this proposal, the United States expressed the view that it is open to considering such a meeting if, but only if, such a summit can produce results of substance. I think this is the correct approach, and it is one I fully support.

EDUCATION TAX INCENTIVES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, yesterday I offered legislation to make permanent a number of education-related tax relief measures. My legislation, S. 2851, also improves and makes permanent helpful provisions for 529 plans and the American opportunity tax credit for education.

At the first hearing I held when I became chairman of the Finance Committee in 2001, I made clear that education tax policy was a priority of mine. As chairman, I was able to remove the 60-payment limit for deducting student loan interest and I was able to increase the income limits for that deduction. This was not the only time I fought hard to allow students to deduct their student loan interest. In 1997 I was able to reinstate the student loan interest deduction that Congress had eliminated from our tax laws. However, the 60-payment limit on the deductibility of student loan interest remained. I ensured that the 2001 tax relief bill took care of that problem. Other incentives for education that I was able to enact into law in 2001 included raising the amount that can be contributed to an education saving account from \$500 to \$2,000; making distributions from prepaid college savings plans and tuition plans tax-free; and making permanent the tax-free treatment of employer-provided educational assistance. These tax policies and many others, including those for school renovations, repairs and construction, have proven their value to Iowa students in dollars and cents, year after year. The tax relief has delivered measureable educational assistance to Iowans and students and families nationwide, making education more affordable and accessible.

One drawback of enacting these provisions in the 2001 tax relief bill, however, is that there was a sunset provision attached to that entire piece of legislation. All of the tax relief needs to be made permanent. Especially the education-related tax provisions. And that is what my bill today does. My bill makes these provisions permanent.

It is no coincidence that I introduced my education tax bill on the day the President of the United States talked about jobs. Our economy demands well-educated workers. The popularity of education tax incentives is good news for workers who find themselves unemployed or who want to go back to school to advance, or even change,